# *A PICTURE*

OF

# CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY;

OR,

A Theological, Philoſophical, and Practical

## Illuſtration

OF THE

## CHARACTER OF JESUS:

IN WHICH THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN TEMPER IS CONTRASTED WITH
THE BENEVOLENT SYSTEM MAINTAINED BY MR. GODWIN
AND OTHER PHILOSOPHERS,

and with

THE VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY,

*BY WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.*

WITH

## STRICTURES

On various Topics

*Of general Intereſt and Importance.*

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# DEDICATION.

TO the lovers of that pure and unſophiſticated Chriſtianity, which is characterized by Vital Benevolence—to the friends of Rational Enquiry—and to the ſincere promoters of Human Happineſs, among whatever ſect or party they may be found, this little work is moſt reſpectfully inſcribed, by

ROBERT FELLOWES,

*Curate of Harbury,*
*Warwickſhire.*

# PREFACE.

A Principal deſign of the preſent publication is, by a delineation of the character of Jeſus, to diſplay the genuine unſophiſticated ſpirit of his religion; and to ſhew what ought to be its influence on the affections and the conduct of men in private life and in public ſtations. Some philoſophers of our times have recommended a ſpirit of univerſal philanthropy, to the extinction of all local and individual partialities.* I have endeavoured to ſhow, that though Chriſtianity inſpires univerſal benevolence, it encourages

* Among the moſt ſingular of theſe is Mr. Godwin, author of an elaborate work, called "Political Juſtice." Mr. G. certainly poſſeſſes great vigor of mind; but how often does he become a mere dreamer of dreams, and a compounder of abſurdities! His ſyſtem is totally impracticable; and even if it were practicable it would be pernicious:—it would aboliſh all the endearments of love and charity, and ſteel the human heart againſt its beſt ſympathies, with a more than ſtoical inſenſibility.

thoſe individual ſympathies which are its foundation; and without which, univerſal philanthropy is but as a "ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal." The name of philanthropy may make a ſweet ſound, but it is but a ſound without the obſervance of the leſſer charities.

Many have repreſented the Chriſtian temper as of the moroſe and ſullen kind; and have thought it criminal for a Chriſtian to engage in the buſtle of the world, and to ſhare in the gaieties of life. But the example of Jeſus ſanctions no ſuch concluſions. He did not make faſting and prayer the key to heaven. He did not enjoin the ſad but the cheerful countenance. Habits of ſolemn devotion he commanded and he practiſed; but his example proves that, that ſpecies of devotion is moſt agreeable to heaven, which abounds moſt in acts of beneficence to man.

The builders of theological ſyſtems ſeem uſually to have paid too much attention to the

writings of St. Paul, and too little to the doctrines and the practice of Chriſt; but I think that a modern believer has very little concern with the epiſtles of the Apoſtle. Thoſe epiſtles were written on particular occaſions and on temporary tropics, to combat the fleeting hereſies, the local and perſonal corruptions of the day. They can, therefore, but ſeldom be applied to the general doctrines of Chriſtianity. Had Chriſtians uniformly attended to this, we ſhould probably never have heard of that diſtinction between faith and charity, with which enthuſiaſts have polluted pure Chriſtianity.

A Chriſtian ought excluſively to conſider what were the doctrines, and what was the practice of Jeſus; which may eaſily be collected from the accounts which the Evangeliſts have left us of his actions and his diſcourſes; and according to theſe we ought, as much as poſſible, to regulate our doctrine, our affections and our practice. The doctrines of Jeſus, as they have been

delivered by the Evangeliſts, are plain and ſimple to all capacities; but the epiſtles filled with alluſions to evaneſcent topics, and to ſchiſms which no longer diſturb the church, are involved in a ten-fold obſcurity, in which even ſagacity and learning will be for ever bewildered. Why then, when we can walk in the light, ſhould we prefer ſtumbling in darkneſs? Is it becauſe we delight more in error than in truth? or becauſe we imagine that there is no piety, where there is no myſtery?

Another cauſe, which has greatly contributed to obſcure the true genius of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, is, that the majority of thoſe who have ſet themſelves down to the ſtudy of the ſubject, have rather endeavoured to make Chriſtianity conform to their opinions, than make their opinions conform to Chriſtianity. Slaves to ſome darling theory or ſome early prepoſſeſſions, they have rather ſought for texts to confirm theſe, than to elucidate the truth, by rational and diſpaſſionate enquiry.

This is a principal reaſon why we have ſo many ſchemes of Chriſtianity, and ſo many ſects of Chriſtians. Individuals, inſtead of endeavouring to diſcover the truth, as it is in Jeſus, have endeavoured to pervert it, to their own narrow prejudices and partial views. But I truſt that we have arrived at an age, when the enquirers into the doctrines of revelation, no longer blinded by the obſtinacy of bigotry or the credulity of ſuperſtition, will cheerfully relinquiſh error to embrace truth; and will be leſs directed by vanity than by love to God and to mankind. Had the evidences and tenets of the Chriſtian religion been conſtantly inveſtigated with theſe affections. and with no other biaſs than a biaſs to benevolence, Skepticiſm could never have prevailed ſo much in the world; there would have been leſs bitterneſs and diſcordancy among believers; and infidelity would, at leaſt, have wanted one ſubject of triumph, in the implacable animoſity of Chriſtians againſt Chriſtians.

It is an abſurd and a dangerous notion, that we can ſerve the cauſe of revelation by limiting the right of free diſcuſſion, or checking it by perſecution. Perſecution always increaſes the evil it is intended to remedy; and religious opinions, which reſpect the intercourſe between man and his maker, ought for ever to be free from human interruption. They are too ſacred for the cognizance of any earthly tribunal.

There ſeems to be a principle in human nature, ever jealous of the leaſt uſurpation on the right of private judgment, particularly in religious concerns; and which, though it often ſeem irregular and capricious in its operations, was yet providently planted in us, by divine wiſdom, as a ſtrong auxiliary to truth, and a counteracting cauſe of tyranny and perſecution. Had not mankind poſſeſſed this principle of counteraction, Chriſtianity, when the miraculous effuſions of the Holy Spirit had ceaſed, might have ſunk lifeleſs and exhauſted under ſucceſſive perſecu-

tions. Truths, the moſt uſeful to mankind, which have commonly been attacked at their firſt appearance, by bigotry or by malice, might have periſhed as ſoon as they were born, and the moral and the intellectual world might have been covered with darkneſs. It was this principle which animated Luther and the early reformers, and ſhook the ſolid and artfully cemented fabric of Popery to its baſe. It is this principle, which arming the conſcience and the reaſon of a man with an energy, proportionate to the fury that oppoſes their free exerciſe, has ſo often cauſed the diffuſion of opinions, to keep pace with the rage that has ſtruggled for their ſuppreſſion.

As it is the colliſion of mind with mind, that diſcovers new truths and elucidates old, Chriſtians ought by no means to diſcourage the diſcuſſion of the evidences of their religion. They ought rather to court ſuch diſcuſſion, and engage in it themſelves, without any of that ſpirit of

bitterneſs, which often diſgraces even the advocates of a good cauſe, and degrades the inveſtigation of ſacred truths into a petty perſonal contention.

Truth ſhould be ſought for truth's ſake; not for the pleaſure of expoſing an adverſary, or for the glory of victory, but for the ſake of diminiſhing error and of diffuſing knowledge. And ſurely the truths of Chriſtianity, of all others, ought not to be diſcuſſed with rancour, but in the mild ſpirit of him from whom they came. The Chriſtian ought to anſwer argument by argument, and not to ſeek the energies of logic in the vindictiveneſs of perſecution. Let the believer and the unbeliever know, that Chriſtianity can ſtand by argument; that it can derive no ſtrength from rage and perſecution; and that, that only deſerves the name of faith which is founded on ſober and rational conviction.

It is full time that the evil ſpirit of perſecution ſhould be laid at reſt for ever. After the

experience of eighteen centuries, it is time that mankind ſhould at laſt be convinced, that opinions, if true, can never be vanquiſhed by oppreſſion, and if falſe, many a melancholy page in hiſtory might have taught us, that human errors yield more certainly to mildneſs than to rage, to reaſon than to puniſhment.*

* When a political ſyſtem is getting into diſrepute, there ſeems to me to be but one way to retrieve its character and to maintain its authority; and that is, by making the people in general feel the happineſs it produces, and their intereſt in ſupporting it.

When the benevolent Count Rumford undertook to reform the moral ſentiments of the Bavarian beggars, he firſt rendered them eaſy and comfortable in their circumſtances. A man is never ſo much averſe to morality as when he is ſtarving with hunger. That diſtreſs which is irretrievable breaks the ſpirit of independence, the ſource of honeſt and virtuous endeavour, and produces the loweſt ſtate of moral degradation. In this abject ſtate, the individual, ceaſing to perceive the bleſſings of civil order, grows impatient of its reſtraints and anxious for its diſſolution. He becomes fit for all kinds of atrocities! If eaſy circumſtances do not always produce morality, they are, at leaſt, moſt favourable to its production; for he who is in a ſtate of wretchedneſs, approaching to deſpair, can hardly fail of being hoſtile to thoſe laws of political juſtice, which conſtitute the individuality of property, and which are the ſtrong baſe of ſocial morality, and the ſacred cement of civil government. No revolution could poſſibly take place in that country, where every individual was intereſted in the preſervation of civil order; or, in other words, was attached by a reciprocal intereſt, to the practice of the duties of reciprocal juſtice. The governors of mankind

Chriſtian charity ſhould incline us to forbearance towards each other; chriſtian humility ought long ago to have inſtructed mankind, that thoſe who claim the right of perſecuting others for their opinions, are themſelves as fallible as thoſe they perſecute. Let us have done with that vehement, dogmatiſing, intolerant and ſanguinary ſpirit, which in former ages burned its victims in the flames; and which, in the preſent, has opened far and wide the ſluices of human gore, and filled the earth with ſpectacles of miſery!!!

cannot give too much attention to this principle, if they wiſh to identify their own power with the intereſts and the affections of the people, and to unite all the gradations of civil ſociety, by the connecting bond of a ſympathetic benevolence.

A communion of happineſs is not only not incompatible with a diſparity of property, but is inattainable without it. The greateſt happineſs which mankind can enjoy on earth, ariſes from a benevolent intercourſe with each other, Were all men equal in circumſtances, there would be no room for a reciprocity of kindneſſes. A diſparity of conditions occaſions a diſparity of wants, and gives riſe to moſt of the affections which gladden life. The complicated and diverſified circumſtances of mankind warm into life and ſtimulate into action thoſe benevolent ſympathies which are the ornaments of our ſpecies, and the prolific cauſes of a reciprocity of happineſs. Without them we ſhould be abſorbed in a brutal ſelfiſhneſs, and acquainted with none but the loweſt animal enjoyments.

The times themſelves, by their awful and tremendous aſpect, portending the wrath of heaven on our preſumption, our animoſity and our crimes, ought to induce us to return to a ſyſtem of reciprocal benevolence and moderation. To ſuffer a mere difference of opinion to make us as hoſtile to each other, as if we were beings of a different ſpecies, appears a ſtrange mockery of the religion we profeſs; whoſe features are mildneſs, and whoſe precepts are love.

Were the deſolating animoſity, which at this moment ſeparates from each other ſtates and individuals, to be perpetual, even a righteous man might be almoſt tempted to loath exiſtence! But let us hope, that theſe days, dark and diſmal as they now appear, will be ſhortened by the All-wiſe and All-good Diſpenſer of individual and of national felicity. Though at this moment the world be teeming with revolutions, though thrones be tottering to their fall, though changes the moſt important have happened ſo rapidly, that they

almoſt appear as the viſions of a dream, let us with calm reſignation, truſt that the Divine Providence is buſily employed in this ſolemn drama; arranging all its parts on the wiſeſt plans, and diſpoſing them, notwithſtanding the gloomy ſadneſs of intermediate diſorders, for a concluſion, favourable to virtue, to piety and to happineſs.

HARBURY,
APRIL 3, 1798.

A PICTURE OF

# CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY,

*&c. &c.*

*Arguments for the truth of Chriſtianity, drawn from a conſideration of the character of Jeſus, &c.*

THE character of Jeſus, as it has been drawn by the Evangeliſts, affords a ſtrong preſumptive proof of the truth of Chriſtianity. The features of it are ſo ſtriking, and yet ſo conſiſtent with each other, that it ſeems abſurd at firſt ſight to ſuppoſe it a fiction; and a fiction of a few peaſants and fiſhermen. Even the friends to infidelity muſt allow it to be the moſt ſingular character that is to be found in the annals of the world: and its ſingularity does not ariſe ſo much from its particular diſſimilitude to others, as from its ſuperiority, in all particulars, to every character of which hiſtory has made any mention in any age. The writers of romance never even feigned a character ſo perfect and excellent. It was beyond the virtue of mortality to equal, and the wit of mortals to imagine.

The difficulty of giving harmony and conſiſtency to a feigned character, and to one placed in extraordinary circumſtances, and repreſented as poſſeſſing extraordinary powers, will be acknowledged by all who ever made the eſſay in works of imagination.

The character of Jeſus is not drawn by the Evangeliſts in the broad lines of vulgar panegyric; but in the artleſs and ſimple touches of a delicate pencil. His praiſes are not ſounded in our ears. His virtues are not particularized; they are not even named: but they are more ſtrongly imprinted in our minds, than if they had been lauded a thouſand times in all the ſplendour of eloquence, by the diſcourſes, the incidents, and the actions of his life. And all theſe diſcourſes, incidents and actions, ſuppoſing them a fiction, muſt have been moſt artfully and ably managed indeed! They are all made ſo aptly to combine, as to repreſent the moſt perfect unity and identity of character.

If, therefore, the Evangeliſts did not paint from life; if they have related diſcourſes which were never delivered, incidents which never happened, features of character, and ſhades of manners, which they never beheld; they muſt have

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been, though confeſſedly without taſte or literature, men of the moſt exquiſite taſte and diſcernment which were ever known. Had they no original before them, they have deſcribed an imagined reſemblance moſt artfully, and yet moſt inartificially.

But can any candid examiner believe, that the Evangeliſts have painted a non-exiſtence? Will he not rather allow that they have delineated the diſcourſes, actions, and manners of Jeſus, ſuch as they were, and ſuch as they witneſſed them to be, in the language of candour, of truth, and ſimplicity?

We are, beſides, to conſider, that the character of Jeſus is not drawn by one perſon only; but by four different hands; all of whom palpably deſcribe the ſame original. In particular circumſtances, and, as it were, ſhades of their narration, they differ; but amid a diverſity of circumſtances, they do not exhibit the leaſt caſt of a diverſity of character. This conſideration is of great importance; becauſe, had they been deſcribing a fictitious character only, it is more than probable, that their differences would have deſtroyed the appearance of its individuality and identity. But, at preſent, theſe differences take

no more from the individual likeneſs, than if ſeveral painters ſhould repreſent the ſame identic features, and only differ in a few minute folds, or ornaments of the drapery.

The Evangeliſts preſerve a perfect conſiſtency and uniformity of character, amid a multitude of petty variations; and which variations only prove, that they did not write in concert; but that, like honeſt men, they delivered the truth, and nothing but the truth, to the beſt of their knowledge and conviction. But had they painted a non-exiſtence, they muſt have written in concert; for ſeveral perſons can never be ſuppoſed to have imagined a ſimilar fiction, without the moſt glaring diſcordancies. And ſuppoſing the Evangeliſts did write in concert, how are we to account for the particular diſſimilitudes which are viſible in the narration?

It may be ſaid, that by an exceſs of refinement in fraud, ſuch diſimilitudes were the effect of colluſion; but this colluſion, of which there is not the leaſt appearance, muſt be proved, before it can be believed; and could it be proved, it would render the Evangeliſts, in whom we cannot trace the leaſt talents for impoſture, the ableſt impoſtors, that ever conquered the

credulity of mankind. Which ever way, the advocates for infidelity attempt to get rid of that argument for the truth of Chriſtianity, which is ſupplied by a candid examination of the character of Jeſus they will, I am perſuaded, find themſelves involved in contradictions and abſurdities; from which there is no eſcape, but by allowing the integrity of the relators, and the truth of the relation.

Admitting the truth of the relation, the truth of the miraculous powers aſcribed to Jeſus and the truth of the Chriſtian religion follow of courſe: but there are many Deiſts, and, I believe, Mr. Paine among the reſt, who, though they do not reject the whole account of the diſcourſes, incidents, and actions of Jeſus, are yet only willing to admit it, as an heterogeneous mixture of truth and fiction; and, conſequently, according to whom, the character of Jeſus muſt have been in part taken from life, and in part from imagination.

For a moment, allowing this ſuppoſition; how are we to draw the line, where the truth ends and the falſhood begins? All the diſcourſes and actions of Jeſus, which are recorded in the Goſpels, are intimately cemented toge-

ther; not by a connection of place, or by a continued chain of ſubordinate cauſation; but by a certain peculiarity of character; which cannot eſcape the notice of the diligent examiner; but which hardly admits of a definition through the imperfections of language. By this peculiarity they are, if I may ſo expreſs it, ſo completely identified with themſelves, and with each other; that it is impoſſible to mark the ſeparation between the genuine and the fictitious hiſtory. If we allow the diſcourſes of Jeſus to be genuine, and yet his miracles to be falſe, we ſhall not eſcape the greateſt embarraſſment. For the diſcourſes aſſert the miracles; and the miracles confirm the diſcourſes. Take away the genuineneſs of the one, and you deſtroy the genuineneſs of the other. We muſt either allow that the diſcourſes, and the miracles, are both genuine; or both fictitious. If we adopt the latter ſuppoſition, we ſhall ſtill be involved in thoſe inconſiſtencies, which I have mentioned above.

Again, if we ſuppoſe that the diſcourſes of Jeſus are a mixture of truth and fiction, of what Jeſus really ſpoke, and what the Evangeliſts imagined, ſtill it will be impoſſible to diſtinguiſh where the firſt ends, and the laſt begins: for, in all the

numerous diſcourſes, which the Evangeliſts have aſcribed to Jeſus, there is without an identity of ſenſe, or of expreſſion, an identity of manner, of ſtyle and character. No man of the leaſt acuteneſs can read the Goſpels without being convinced of this. But this identity of manner, &c. in the diſcourſes ſeems almoſt impoſſible to be reconciled with the ſuppoſition of their being a combination of truth and fiction; for falſhood never could have been patched upon truth, and particularly by different hands, and in ſuch a variety of inſtances without the point of their conjunction being very perceptible. A modern architect might with more probability of ſucceſs attempt to reſtore the remains of an antient pile of Grecian ſimplicity, or of Gothic exuberance, ſo that the moſt diligent and curious obſerver, could not diſcern the difference between the old work and the new.

The features of truth can ſeldom be brought into ſuch an intimate, and as it were impalpable, and inviſible union with thoſe of falſhood, as that the latter ſhall be entirely concealed. And yet this extreme improbability muſt have happened, on the ſuppoſition that the diſcourſes of Jeſus are a maſs of truth and fiction.

Allowing the genuineneſs of the diſcourſes, the truth of the miracles is a neceſſary deduction. In the diſcourſes, there is a frequent aſſumption of miraculous powers, and a preſumption of their notoriety. On theſe powers Jeſus ſolely and excluſively reſts the truth of his miſſion. How would any perſon of ſuperior good ſenſe and diſcernment, as even the enemies to Jeſus muſt allow him to have been, have falſely arrogated the poſſeſſion of ſuch powers? Would he have reſted his whole claim to veracity on a groundleſs aſſertion? Would he have diſgraced himſelf by a falſhood, of which every peaſant in Iſrael could have convicted him?

It will be no eaſy matter to ſolve theſe difficulties which I have ſtated, without allowing that Jeſus delivered thoſe diſcourſes which the Evangeliſts have aſcribed to him; and wrought thoſe miracles with which they are ſo frequently aſſociated.

# A PICTURE OF
# CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY,
## &c. &c.

*The character of Jeſus, illuſtrated with philoſophical, theological and practical obſervations.*

THE character of individuals may be uſually identified with the influence of early impreſſions. Thoſe impreſſions made at a time, when the ſuſceptibility of excitement is the greateſt, and when, the ſenſations poſſeſs a peculiar vivacity, commonly conſtitute the baſis of character. They communicate to the mind, and the affections their diſcriminating features. In infancy how frequently do we imbibe the ſeeds of thoſe ſympathies, which inviſibly influence the happineſs or the miſery of our future lives ! ! ! *

* I ſee no reaſon to diſpute the opinion of Dr. Darwin, that the moral ſenſe is the product of early ſympathies. That peculiar bent of mind, which diſcriminates individuals through life, and which when it diſplays itſelf with a predominating vigor in any branch of art or ſcience, is commonly called Genius, is probably derived from the ſame ſource;—from early ſympathies; and which often take place ſo early

From the circumſtances in which Jeſus appears to have been placed in early life, we might ſuppoſe that a very different character would have been formed from that repreſented by the Evangeliſts. The parents of Jeſus were poor, and lived in obſcurity; gaining their livelihood by their humble induſtry. They therefore could not afford to give him what among the Jews was called a learned education. He was probably brought up to the profeſſion of his father; and, ſuppoſing him no more than an ordinary mortal, the only means he had of

that it is impoſſible to trace them to their original ſource. Sir Joſhua Reynolds, as we are informed by Johnſon in his life of Cowley, imbibed the firſt fondneſs for his favourite art, from the peruſal of Richardſon's treatiſe on painting. Chatterton probably derived his partiality for antiquities, from having been taught his letters from ſome illumined leaves of an old Miſſal—Theſe inſtances, to which many more might be added, ſhow the power of accidental impreſſions; and how ſtudious thoſe who have the care of children ought to be, that no impreſſions be made on their minds, which, as the very ſagacious author of Zoonomia has obſerved, may biaſs their affections, or miſlead judgments to the ends of their lives. See Zoonom, Vol. XI. 386. Education as far as it reſpects the formation of habits, cannot be begun too early. Habits which beget peeviſh and unſocial tempers, and which tend to moral depravity, by being aſſociated with malevolence, are probably often formed by the miſmanagements of mothers, and nurſes, in their firſt period of childhood. At that period, the faculty of aſſociation is moſt alive and vigorous; and which according to its peculiar determination, uſually influences the temper and the character of man to the laſt of his days.

acquiring that knowledge, which was requiſite to empower him to ſubvert the religious inſtitutions of his own Country, and of the world, and to become the founder of a new and ſpiritual worſhip, of a houſe of prayer for all nations, were, by attending the ſynagogue, and the ſolemn feaſts at Jeruſalem.

The whole literature of the Jews conſiſted of one book, the Law and the Prophets, with the comments and traditions of the Scribes and Phariſees. Theſe were the only ſources of wiſdom, to which he could have acceſs; but from theſe, had Jeſus not been under a divine influence, imparting wiſdom from above, he muſt have been debarred by ignorance. For we gather from John vii. 15, 16. that he had received no literary inſtruction whatever. "How (ſaid the Jews) knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" What learning he poſſeſſed was not an artificial acquiſition. "My doctrine, (ſaid Jeſus, in reply to the objection of the Jews,) is not mine but his that ſent me."

A child uſually imbibes at leaſt ſome portion of the prejudices of his parents, and of thoſe among whom he is educated. The univerſal prejudices of the Jews at the time of the nativity

of Jeſus are well known. Among theſe prejudices, one of the moſt predominant, was the expectation of a triumphant Meſſiah, a conceited opinion of their own, and a ſupercilious diſdain of all other nations. Theſe prejudices inſtilled by his parents and acquaintance, would have flowed ſoftly and almoſt . inſenſibly into the boſom of Jeſus. And had he been only an impoſtor, it is more than probable that he would himſelf have been the dupe of thoſe early prepoſſeſſions; and certainly he would not have taken ſo direct a ſtep to defeat his own views, by oppoſing the favourite, the long and univerſally received notions of his countrymen. Had he aſpired from ambitious, or from perſonal views to counterfeit the Meſſiah, he would not have attempted to extirpate the prejudices of a whole people, but to turn them to account; he would have taken advantage of every circumſtance, to maintain the character he aſſumed; and to make the popular opinion ſubſervient to his temporal aggrandiſement.

But in the very commencement of his miniſtry, Jeſus directly combated the bigoted attachments, the darling prepoſſeſſions of every Jew; and boldly oppoſed his ſingle and feeble

arm, to ſtem the current of thoſe popular notions, which at that time rolled with a fierce impetuoſity through the whole extent of Paleſtine; and of which he himſelf, had he been no more than man, could hardly have ſuſtained the overwhelming force. What individual can reſiſt the powerful influence of general ſympathy?

When therefore Jeſus ſet up for the propagator of a new religion, he muſt either have unlearned the prejudices, and totally eraſed the impreſſions of his early years; which on the ſuppoſition of his mortality is highly improbable; or we muſt allow that he was exempted by the peculiar bleſſing of the divine influence from the force of thoſe primary aſſociations, which according to the uſual laws of action affect the character and the conduct to the cloſe of life.

LET us now look a little nearer into the character of Jeſus, and inveſtigate ſome of its peculiar and diſcriminating excellencies.

In Jeſus, we behold none of thoſe ſhowy and noiſy virtues, which dazzle vulgar eyes and attract vulgar praiſe. In his character there are none of thoſe ornamental features, which are more ſubſervient to ambition than to utility,

There is neither in his actions nor his ſentiments the leaſt of parade. There is no faſcinating ſplendor, to cheat the judgment into admiration. There is a ſtill compoſure of manner, a ſilent dignity of carriage, which inſpires a ſentiment of love mingled with admiration. There is every thing truly great, without the leaſt ſhow of greatneſs. It is a character totally diſtinct from that proud and fiery impetuoſity which often paſſes for magnanimity; from that ſullen apathy, which is ſometimes miſtaken for grandeur; from that undiſtinguiſhing and viſionary zeal, which is the mimic of devotion; and from that affectation of purity, which aſſumes the name of holineſs.

It is a character which is inimitable; while it ſeems rather below than above the level of human imitation. The paſſive virtues are its moſt conſpicuous features; and theſe, however they may be depreciated by common minds, or however eaſy of attainment they may be accounted, are, in truth, more difficult to be acquired, and more productive of happineſs, than the energies of a buſy and a turbulent diſpoſition.

But if the character of Jeſus be diſcriminated, by the loveliеſt features of gentleneſs, meekneſs, forbearance, patience, humility and reſigna-

tion; ſtill it is marked with more energetic qualities; by a benevolence, which is ever awake to the touch of ſympathy, which is ever vigorouſly employed in diſſipating miſery. If he be adorned by a mildneſs that reſents no inſult and retaliates no injury, he, at the ſame time, diſplays a ſpirit ardent in oppoſing error and combating wickedneſs.

Jeſus begins his celebrated ſermon on the mount, by beſtowing the tribute of eternal bleſſedneſs on thoſe unoſtentatious qualities, and retired graces, which leaſt excite the envy or admiration of the world. It is obſervable, that he commends thoſe affections and virtues moſt, by which he was himſelf moſt eminently diſtinguiſhed. He was always the pattern of his own leſſons. He taught what he practiced; and he practiced what he taught. He was poor in ſpirit; he was meek, merciful, and pure in heart*.

* The more we examine the precepts of Jeſus, the more we ſhall be convinced, that they proceeded from a perfect acquaintance with the mind and affections, and with the efficient cauſes of human happineſs or miſery. He knew, that the great ſum of the afflictions of life was occaſioned by turbulence, vindictiveneſs, and malignity of diſpoſition. Hence all public and private ſtrife; the ſeeds of animoſity between individuals and nations. On this account, Jeſus laid ſo much ſtreſs upon the paſſive virtues; on the ſilent kindneſs of the heart. Were meekneſs, gentleneſs and kindneſs univerſal—the ſword might reſt in its ſcabbard; every kingdom and every houſe would be a temple of peace.

The fiery ſpirit of revenge is moſt predominant in that ſtate of human nature, which is fartheſt removed from the knowledge of the Deity, and from religious purity. The nearer approaches which man makes to the divine perfections, the more will this ſavage paſſion be abated. But though revenge be a paſſion utterly irreconcileable with the ſpirit of pure religion, ſtill the complete ſuppreſſion of it is impoſſible to man, without the divine aſſiſtance. For man being made exquiſitely ſenſible to pleaſure and to pain, has naturally a deſire for the firſt, and an averſion for the laſt. Hence, he cannot help aſſociating ſome idea of malevolence with the image of thoſe who wilfully inflict painful ſenſations. The paſſion of hate begins, however faintly, to ferment, the moment an injury is felt; and even in the gentleſt of human boſoms, there is uſually ſome tranſient interval of paſſion, before the religious ſentiments, or benevolent ſympathies can check the angry effervescence.

Of all the perſons recorded in hiſtory, Jeſus ſeems the only one, who ever obtained a complete triumph over the paſſion of reſentment; and in whoſe boſom it was totally abſorbed in the oppoſite paſſion of love. This love he demon-

ſtrated by an uniform meekneſs and forbearance; by the happineſs he diffuſed while he lived, and when he died. He endured with patience, and without the leaſt acrimony, perſecution, ſcorn, and inſult; he never returned railing, for railing; but contrarywiſe, bleſſing. He exhibited that poorneſs of ſpirit, which is the higheſt degree of magnanimity; in-as-much as a victory over the angry paſſions, and the indignant feelings that rage for vent in the boſom, is the moſt difficult and moſt glorious of atchievements. The conqueror of Darius and of Perſia was ruled, like a weak woman, by the guſt of his reſentments.*

* Every phyſical ſenſation of pain is accompanied with a wiſh to remove it; and where is it ſo natural, to wiſh to remove it, as to the cauſe which occaſioned it? Hence revenge, or the deſire of reverberating pain and retaliating injuries. A revenge of this kind, which is of a phyſical rather than a moral nature, would ceaſe with the ſenſations that produced it. But revenge, we know, often rankles in the heart, long after the cauſe which firſt excited it has ceaſed to exert any painful influence. The ſentiment of reſentment is cheriſhed by malignant reflections, when its firſt effervescence has ſubſided; and is combined with many aſſociated ideas of honour or of pleaſure, till cruelty almoſt becomes a paſtime. How much might we diminiſh the ſum of human miſery, if we could, in ſome meaſure, reverſe the common order of human ſympathies, and teach children univerſally to aſſociate the idea of honour with forbearance, and of pleaſure with forgiveneſs! How much rancour and bloodſhed might, by this means be prevented! The happineſs of individuals is, I am inclined to believe, always in a direct ratio with their benevolent ſympathies; the happineſs of mankind, conſidered in the aggregate, evidently is.

But he who triumphed over the croſs, was ſignalized by a greater atchievement than the ſubverſion of empires;—by the maſtery of himſelf. He never performed any action that, in the leaſt, indicated reſentment; he never uttered a word of anger or a taunt of bitterneſs.

Such was the meekneſs and forbearance of him, who is, by a beautiful emblem of innocence, called—the Lamb of God. Of this temper and carriage he ſet us the example; becauſe he knew, that it would moſt effectually promote our happineſs here; and fit us for an intercourſe with the bleſſed ſpirits hereafter, who dwell in the manſions of peace, where turbulence and malignity can never enter.

Jeſus laid the utmoſt ſtreſs, in moſt of his diſcourſes, on the importance of the placid and the benevolent affections; and, probably, from their being the eſſential characteriſtics of that ſtate of future happineſs, to which the good Chriſtian hopes for a paſſage through the grave. On this occaſion the reader will pardon a ſlight digreſſion. It is the opinion of the immortal Hartley, that the aſſociations or ſympathies we contract on earth, will accompany us into a future ſtate. If this be true, and it is certainly no unſcriptural

doctrine, but apparently confirmed by the *general tendency* of the diſcourſes of Jeſus, of what vaſt conſequence is it to us to cheriſh the benevolent ſympathies; and to indulge all the kind affections! How ſtudiouſly ought parents to labour to inſtil them into their children, that they may grow up with them; and, after this life, expand into immortal happineſs! How earneſtly ought we to check the progreſs of all malevolent ſenſations! How anxious ſhould we be to avoid aſſociating any ideas of pleaſure with the ſight of miſery, with the infliction of pain, or with any act of inhumanity! The malignant paſſions are, even here, the ſource of the acuteſt miſery to thoſe who unfortunately indulge them; and, on the ſuppoſition I have ſtated, they will prove a ſource of the moſt exquiſite torment in another life. Thus, the aſſociations of this ſtate not being diſſolved in the next, the malignant will be puniſhed by habitual and inaleniable ſenſations of their own malignity. They will in ſome meaſure reſemble the Devil, the real or allegorical element of evil; and who is painted in ſcripture as continually going about, ſeeking whom he may devour; deſtitute of a ſingle ſpark of one benevolent ſympathy;—the image of pure, unmixed

malignity!!! Could he have been more forcibly delineated, either to excite terror or abhorrence? But let us return to the contemplation of a more pleaſing form.

Of genuine humility Jeſus was a ſtriking example in his whole deportment; in every geſture, every word, every action. His humility was not the affectation of that virtue, which is ſo often aſſumed in the world to cover an intolerable pride. It was pure and unadulterated; not the ſhow, but the ſubſtance of a lowly heart.

That the humility of Jeſus was not a veil for arrogance, or for vanity, he gave the moſt lively inſtance on the night before his crucifixion; in waſhing the feet of his diſciples. This act of humiliation he performed, as a laſting admonition againſt that pride of heart, which often makes man look with diſdain on his brother-man. There is nothing more ludicrous in the eye of a contemplative philoſopher, and there can be nothing more impious in the ſight of heaven, than that ſupercilious inſolence, with which ambitious vanity, raiſed by accidental diſtinctions, regards thoſe beneath it. Such a temper Jeſus has forcibly reprimanded in the inſtance I have mentioned. "Ye call me," ſaid Jeſus, "maſter and

lord; and ye ſay well, for ſo I am. If I then, your lord and maſter, have waſhed your feet, ye ought alſo to waſh one another's feet. I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you." John xiii. 13, 14, 15. As if he had ſaid, "If I who was glorified with the father before the world was," John xvii. 5. can bend to the loweſt offices; and without ſullying my majeſty, can perform thoſe acts which are eſteemed the moſt ſervile degradations; ſhall thy vanity, O man, render thee arrogant and overbearing! Shalt thou deem thyſelf contaminated by any act of condeſcenſion, becauſe thou happeneſt to be raiſed a ſtep or two higher in the ſcale of wealth or honour than thy brother! If I did not refuſe the garb of mortality, and among mortals the form of a ſervant, ſhalt thou who in the ſight of heaven, art but a worm of the earth, vainly fancy thyſelf made of better ſtuff than thy fellow-worm!

The benevolence of Jeſus, though unbounded, was yet not that pretended and much-boaſted ſentiment of univerſal love, which loſes ſight of individual miſery; and ſcorns the endearing ties which bind families and nations. He went about doing good; binding up the broken-heart-

ed; pouring comfort into the boſom of the wretched. As he came to exhibit a character proper for the imitation of man, he came adorned with all thoſe affections which are the brighteſt ornaments of our nature.

I think I may ſafely ſay, that no man was ever warmed with the genuine fire of univerſal benevolence, while he was entirely exempt from all local and perſonal attachments. No good man can be inſenſible to the delicate, and inſinuating partialities, of friendſhip, of kindred and of country. Theſe affections are almoſt inſeparable from our frame; and are produced by thoſe numberleſs aſſociations of ideas, and ſenſations of paſt, and preſent time, of which we can neither calculate the power, nor controul the influence. The principle of aſſociation ſeems indeed by the wiſe author of all things, to have been made a part of our nature; for the purpoſe of connecting us by the ſtrongeſt and deareſt ties with our families, and our homes; and making us feel, more vigorouſly, the inſpiring glow of friendſhip and of patriotiſm.

The breaſt of an individual is too narrow to feel, with any diſtinctneſs, the ſentiment of univerſal philanthropy. Our affections muſt, at leaſt

at firſt, have ſome diſtinct object on which to fix; —an object whoſe magnitude is not too great for the excitement of lively and particular ſenſations. What is termed univerſal philanthropy, is merely a general and confuſed feeling, ſeldom animating to energetic action.* As we muſt proceed from particular to general truths, ſo it is from individual affections alone, that the ſoul expands to the genuine, ardent, and diffuſive love of the human race. From the affections of family, of friendſhip, and of the ſpot which was endeared to us by early intercourſe, by tender recollection, and by numberleſs aſſociations, ſprings the love of our country; and thence the heart, kindling with increaſed benevolence, and catching the flame of divine love, enlarges into

* That philanthropy is counterfeit which is not attended by benevolent ſympathies, and benevolent actions. Since the death of Howard, (peace to thy aſhes, and glory to thy memory, thou miniſtering angel to the cells of miſery!) Count Rumford, the poor man's patron, and every man's friend, deſerves the foremoſt rank in the liſt of philanthropiſts. Nor can the wreath of philanthropy well be denied to the brows of Darwin and of Beddoes; whoſe ſingular ability and induſtry, in ſoothing the moſt calamitous of human afflictions, and in diminiſhing the numerous ills which life has to encounter from infancy to age, from the cradle to the grave, merit a ſtatue on every ſhore, where the traces of humanity are to be found. Among the illuſtrious names, that human gratitude will tranſmit down the ſtream of time, there are few which poſterity will repeat with more reverence than thoſe of Darwin and of Beddoes.

a wider, and wider ſphere, till it opens to embrace the world.

I am not indeed ignorant that many perſons have felt the heat of the partial and local affections; have loved their kindred, their friends, and their country; whoſe boſoms have never been inflamed with the ſentiment of univerſal benevolence;* and that many, who have diſ-

* One of the perſons here alluded to, is Mr. Burke. Of the character of this extraordinary perſonage, I ſhall preſent the reader with a ſlight ſketch, not drawn from perſonal acquaintance, but from calm reflection on his conduct and his writings.

The affections of Mr. Burke all gravitated toward his kindred, incapable of a wider expanſion. Of philanthropy he poſſeſſed but little; or he would not have ſtruggled ſo long, and with ſo much energy and obſtinacy to produce the extermination, by fire and ſword, of twenty-four millions of his fellow-men. His morality was neither enlarged by a diffuſive benevolence, nor animated by an enlightened piety. His friendſhip was warm, while it laſted; but it was liable to be interrupted by the irritable petulance of his temper. Inflated with the pride of genius, he was impatient of contradiction; and his reſentments were, in more than one inſtance, indulged even to bitterneſs.

His fame, with poſterity, will reſt chiefly on the ſplendor of his eloquence; but this being employed rather in the embelliſhment of prejudices that are evaneſcent, than in the ſupport of principles that are immortal I doubt whether it has earned him a wreath of glory, that may wave defiance to the rage of time. His ſtyle, as an orator, is vehement, impetuous, and often highly impaſſioned; fraught with the beautiful combinations of genius, and diſplaying the magnificent decorations of an exuberant fancy; but he is rarely diſcriminated by thoſe ſublime conceptions which ariſe from comprehenſive views, and which mark an intellect of the higheſt order. His wit ſparkles with brilliancy; its flaſhes often

claimed the tender charities of family, friends, and kindred, have boaſted loudly of being fired

captivate as much by their juſtneſs, as their ſplendor; but he ſometimes purſues them, till they loſe their luſtre, and till langour takes place of aſtoniſhment.

When he attempts to reaſon in a logical order, his arguments too often reſemble the Sybill's leaves; they are diſperſed in a moment by the breath of his imagination. His judgment may, for a while, rule his fancy: but his fancy always, at laſt, ſucceeds in ruling his judgment.

He was well acquainted with men, and with human affairs in their little detail; but he does not ſeem to have conſidered, like a philoſopher, the general principles, or like a benevolent Chriſtian, the general intereſts of human nature. His political reaſonings are often weak, becauſe they are taken entirely from partial views, and from fleeting intereſts; and do not reſt on the baſis of eternal and unchangeable truth. Could he have effected his wiſhes, he would have eſtabliſhed an oligarchy of wealth and rank, on the ruin of the rights of mankind. He would have placed the liberties of the people on no firmer baſis than the conceſſions of the the crown; and he would have deſpoiled the monarchy of thoſe wholeſome limitations, which are a ſource of happineſs both to the prince and to the people.

The principles of Mr. Burke, ſeem to have been rather modified by his intereſt, than his intereſt by his principles. His principal purſuit was private emolument; but he endeavoured to impreſs on others, till perhaps he had impreſſed on himſelf, the conviction, that it was the public good. His private embarraſſments increaſed, by inattention and profuſeneſs; unfortunately, for his country and for the world, rendered him venal; and if we may judge from his ſentiments, on the reſiſtance of America, his opinions on the French revolution were leſs ſwayed by his conſcience than his penſion. Poſſeſſing thoſe energies of genius, which taking an independent direction, might have rendered him, as much the benefactor, as he was the ornament of his ſpecies: his talents contributed but little, to enlarge the ſtock of wiſdom; and though they have rendered ſome ſervice to taſte, and diverſified the elegant combinations of language; yet theſe are but paltry benefits, compared with the miſeries of that deſolating conteſt, in which, they contributed to involve his country.

with the ſpirit of univerſal philanthropy.§ With reſpect to thoſe of the firſt claſs, I ſtrongly ſuſ-

Rouſſeau has been too often extolled as a philanthropiſt. Mr. Burke ſaid of him, that he loved his kind, and hated his kindred. The expoſure of his children, by whatever ſophiſtry it may be excuſed, is an indelible blot on his humanity, and invalidates all his pretenſions to philanthropy. For, can that philanthropy be genuine, which is founded on the extinction of the parental affections; and which, with a more than ſavage brutality, forſakes the poor innocents it brings into the world?

Every page of Rouſſeau glows with the captivations of that ſentimental luxury, of which he is ſo great a maſter; and which he arrays in all the blandiſhments of eloquence. Hence the ſource of that admiration, which his writings have ſo univerſally excited. Though his judgment, as a philoſopher, was not profound; yet his taſte was ſo exquiſite, that he ſtrews flowers in the moſt rugged way, and intereſts the paſſions and the fancy, in the inveſtigation of the moſt abſtract propoſitions. This is his great excellence.

His Eloiſe is a high-finiſhed picture of ſenſuality, refined by delicacy. His Emilus, though marked by the illuminating touches and the original conceptions of genius; yet, conſidered as a ſyſtem, is more conſpicuous for its ſingularity than its truth. It pourtrays a ſyſtem of education, which, if it were univerſally adopted, would keep the human ſpecies in a ſtate of permanency, between light and darkneſs, between ſavage barbarity and civilized refinement. It would counteract the moral and phyſical improvement of man, the progreſs of knowledge, and the productiveneſs of induſtry.

Though Rouſſeau had little practical beneficence, yet his writings breathing nothing but the reciprocal love, and kindneſs, and confidence of the Golden Age, contributed, by their wide diffuſion and their enchanting eloquence, to render humanity faſhionable; and they have, at leaſt, this merit—that no man can well riſe from reading them, without feeling a higher reſpect for his ſpecies.

Of the ſtyle of Rouſſeau, the peculiar characteriſtic is exuberance of imagery; profuſion, without diſtinction of luſtre. It reſembles a landſcape, in which there is a great aſſemblage of beautiful forms, without any

pect it will be found, that their affections were prevented by narrow prejudices from a wider expanſion. Of the laſt claſs, I fear that the majority are uſually men of little virtue, and of leſs ſenſibility; too cold for friendſhip; too inert for beneficence; and claiming the wreath of philanthropy, without deſerving it by any acts of human kindneſs.

Individuals ourſelves; our affections (if I may uſe a quaint expreſſion) have a natural tendency towards individuality. He, who pretends to love all perſons alike, really loves none. There can, in the human breaſt, be no general, and univerſal, without ſome partial affections. It is from the combination of particular ſympathies, of perſonal and local attachments, that we at laſt imbibe the flame of a comprehenſive, and boundleſs benevolence.

I have ſaid thus much on this ſubject; becauſe it has been the faſhion of late to paſs pompous eulogies on univerſal philanthropy; and to leave unnoticed, friendſhip, patriotiſm and family love.

intermediate ſpots of barrenneſs; but without any objects of a ſtriking and prominent grandeur; and, in the contemplation of which, the eye is at laſt ſatiated by the uniformity.

The breaſt of Jeſus was certainly warmed with the brighteſt fires of univerſal love; but that love did not extinguiſh the leſſer charities. The ſpirit of philanthropy did not liberate him from the tender bondage of local and perſonal attachments. His heart was not inſenſible to the ſympathies of private friendſhip. Though he ſelected twelve perſons to be his diſciples, and conſtant companions; yet of theſe twelve, he ſeems to have regarded three, Peter, James, and John,* with a more peculiar and affectionate confidence; and of theſe three, one is emphatically ſtiled "the Apoſtle whom Jeſus loved."† John was the congenial friend of his ſoul; and dear to him, as Jonathan was to David.

Jeſus well knew, that a tender and reciprocal friendſhip, can gladden the melancholy path of human life. He therefore ſanctioned by his example, that pure flame of private friendſhip; which inſpires different perſons, with an identity of intereſt; and which, while it increaſes the

* They alone of his Diſciples were permitted to be preſent, at his transfiguration, and during his agony in the garden. See Matt. xxvi. 37.

† The character of John, which rendered him worthy of being beloved by Jeſus, ſeems to have been diſtinguiſhed by the moſt amiable benevolence. His epiſtles inculcate love to mankind, as the ſum of all religion. See 1 John iii. 11, 14, 17, 18, 23. and iv. 7, 8, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21.

happineſs of individuals, need ſubſtract nothing from the ſum of general benevolence.

That Jeſus was neither an enemy, nor a ſtranger to the tender ſympathies, we may alſo learn from, John xi. where we behold him yielding to the amiable emotions of human infirmity, and ſhedding tears of compaſſion at the grave of Lazarus. When the Jews, on this occaſion, ſaw him weeping; "behold," ſaid they, "how he loved him."

As Jeſus was not inſenſible to friendſhip, neither was he callous to the affections which ought to unite kindred blood. When agonizing on the croſs, his own pains did not render him forgetful of his mortal mother. He ſaw her ſtanding by his croſs; the thought of her deſtitute condition awakened his ſympathy; and he commended her with peculiar earneſtneſs to the care of his beloved diſciple. "Behold," ſaid he to the Evangeliſt, "thy mother!" The moſt elaborate recommendation could not have ſaid more; and more was not neceſſary to be ſaid, to make the Apoſtle feel the love of a ſon for the mother of his dying maſter.

Some have thought, that the heat of patriotiſm which a good man feels for the welfare of

his native country, ought to be extinguiſhed in the ſpirit of a more comprehenſive patriotiſm, which attaches him to the univerſal welfare of his ſpecies; without any partial, or peculiar concern for the people with whom he was bred, or the country in which he was born. But, I think, that no man, unleſs he has wandered from his very infancy like a vagabond over the earth, without ever taſting, or communicating the comforts of domeſtic ſociety, can well overcome thoſe early aſſociations, which endear him to the fields of his youth; and which as it were, aſſimilate his nature to the language, to the manners, and the intereſt of his native country. For that country can he refrain from burning with ſome ſparks of a peculiar fondneſs? Is ſuch a partiality criminal? Is it not rather a virtue, which aſſociation produces, but which heaven approves? For among every people, of every clime, whether barbarous or civilized, whether inhabiting ſpots of luxuriant fertility, or of eternal barrenneſs, the love of the "natate ſolum" has ever been a predominant paſſion; of which the extinction would cover the various regions of the earth with ſhades of melancholy, and dry up the perennial ſource of their intereſts, their

captivations and their charms*. That philoſophy, therefore, appears to me of a pernicious

* The power of aſſociation over the affections will be ſtrongly ſeen, in an inſtance which I am going to mention, from Captain Cook's laſt voyage to the Pacific Ocean. On Captain Clerke's arrival at the town of St. Peter and St. Paul, in Kamſchatka, Mr. King, Mr. Webber and others were diſpatched to the commanding officer, at Bolcheretſk. On their way they were hoſpitably entertained at the little village of Karatchin. Whilſt they were dining in a miſerable hut, the gueſts of abſolute ſtrangers, and at the extremity of the habitable globe, a ſolitary half-worn pewter ſpoon ſoon attracted their attention. "Its form," ſays the narrator, "was familiar to us; and the word London was ſtamped upon the back of it. It is impoſſible to expreſs the anxious hopes and tender remembrances this excited in us. Thoſe who have been long abſent from their native country, will readily conceive what inexpreſſible pleaſure ſuch trifling incidents can give."

On the ſubject of aſſociation I ſhall dwell a little longer. Moſt of our pleaſures ſeem derived from this ſource. In the views of nature, many proſpects excite agreeable ſenſations, which have nothing beautiful in themſelves; and for which, no other cauſe can be aſſigned, than that theſe proſpects bear a reſemblance to thoſe which were connected by us, in our infancy, with agreeable ſenſations. Theſe ſenſations were excited by cauſes foreign to the beauty of the view itſelf; but which, in the lapſe of time, have been intimately blended with it, and become parts of it. Similar views, then, produce the very ſenſations which originated from aſſociated ideas. The ſight of fields, which in their form or poſition reſemble thoſe in which our early days were ſpent, would inſpire us with delightful emotions; and, at firſt, without our knowing why; for we ſhould not immediately recollect the ſimilitude. Ideas of pleaſure having been aſſociated with particular forms, or with this or that diſpoſition of country are ſubject to frequent revival, when the cauſes which firſt produced them are forgotten.—We generally attach the idea of beauty to ſmooth undulating ſurfaces; and the contemplation of them, raiſes in the heart, feelings that pleaſe. The firſt pleaſures of men are excited by

caſt, which would reduce the affections to an uniform level; which would make an Engliſhman as zealous for the proſperity of France, or of China, or Siberia, as for that of Britain; and which would extinguiſh the partial flame of all local ſympathies.

Patriotiſm, like extenſion, muſt begin at a point, but may be increaſed by a gradual diffuſion, till it become a philanthropy, that knows no other limits than the limits of nature. But as the circulation near the heart is more warm, freſh and vigorous, than at the extremities, ſo

their mother's breaſt; the agreeable ſenſations which the infant experiences in ſucking, are afterwards attached to the ſoftneſs, ſmoothneſs, and whiteneſs of the milky fountain. His eyes feaſt on it with placid rapture! his little fingers move, in various directions, gently over the ſwelling breaſt. Surfaces that have ſimilar, ſpiral and waving lines, afterwards excite ſimilar emotions.—There is, perhaps, nothing either really beautiful or ugly in itſelf; but as it is aſſociated with ideas of pleaſure or averſion, or with circumſtances which have, ſome way or other, intereſted our feelings, or influenced our enjoyments.

A good-natured German, in a journey he made on foot through ſeveral parts of England, ſays, "When I was paſt Bakewell, a place far inferior to Derby, I came by the ſide of a broad river to a ſmall eminence, where a fine cultivated field lay before me. This field, *all at once, made an indeſcribable and very pleaſing impreſſion on me*; which, at firſt, I could not account for; till I recollected having ſeen, in my childhood, near the village where I was educated, a ſituation ſtrikingly ſimilar to that now before me, in England." See Travels by C. P. Moritz. 12mo. Robinſons. See likewiſe Zoonom, vol. i. 145.

every man's affections for his native country ought to be more fervent and vivid, than that philanthropic heat which may intereſt him in the happineſs of diſtant regions.

A good Chriſtian will be a citizen of his own country before he will claim the too often affected appellation of a citizen of the world; a name frequently abuſed to diſguiſe a baſe inſenſibility to the beſt affections of the human heart.*

* Mr. Paine pretends to glory in the ſenſeleſs appellation of a citizen of the world. He caſts off, with diſdain, all local, perſonal and national ſympathies; and would have mankind live in a ſtate of total inſenſibility to friendſhip or to patriotiſm; regarding every people as their countrymen, and every country as their home. But this philoſophy is not ſuited to the preſent conſtitution of human nature.

Mr. Paine boaſts of his philanthropy, and does not ſeem to conſider that philanthropy takes its riſe from the patriotic affections. Does Mr. Paine's philanthropy conſiſt in enriching France, with the plunder of England? if ſo, God keep us from ſuch philanthropiſts!

Mr. Paine is an implacable enemy to hereditary power in any ſhape, or under any modifications. In this, as in many other of his political opinions, he ſeems to err, by conſidering rather what is abſtractedly good, than what is ſuited to the preſent condition of mankind.

The united experience of hiſtory proves, that whatever may be the advantages of an elective chief-magiſtrate, they can never balance the actual evils which invariably attend an unſettled ſovereignty.

It is, indeed, impoſſible to make an hereditary phyſician or an hereditary philoſopher; but an hereditary king implies not the ſame abſurdity; for, though wiſdom and virtue be deſirable attributes of royalty, ſtill the want of them is not incompatible even with the uſeful exerciſe of kingly power; in thoſe caſes, in which the arbitrary wiſhes of the

But though a good Chriſtian will glory in a partial fondneſs for his own country, ſtill he will

monarch are controuled, and his prerogative limited by a repreſentative body, whoſe intereſts are identified with thoſe of the people.

Till human nature be much altered from what it is at preſent, hereditary royalty ſeems the only expedient which human wiſdom can deviſe, for preventing the ambition of individuals from diſturbing the tranquillity of the ſtate. Where the ſupreme power is either unoccupied or in a conſtant ſtate of fluctuation, the paſſions of every ambitious man in the kingdom are ſet on fire; and almoſt every village offers a competitor for the diadem. Where there is a crown to be ſeized, there will never be wanting an hoſt of uſurpers; for daily experience teſtifies, that it is natural to man to overlook the calculation of probable evils, even in caſes in which they infinitely exceed the probabilities of ſucceſs.

In the motley affairs of the world, the moſt that is uſually left for man to do, is to make a prudent choice of evils; and therefore the politician, who has maturely inveſtigated the principles of human nature, will not ſo much conſider whether monarchy have no diſadvantages, as whether democracy have not greater and more ſerious ones.

As in chooſing a form of government we can only chooſe between evils, we ſhould chooſe that which is beſt adapted to the preſent ſtate of ſociety—to the actual, not the poſſible or even probable, progreſſion of men in knowledge and in virtue. The metaphiſical architects of political ſyſtems are too apt to forget the exiſting ſtate of morality, and reaſon in viſionary dreams of the perfectibility of the human ſpecies. Was not this the grand error of Condorcet and other legiſlators, who, aſpiring to metaphiſical perfection, overlooked the frail wanderings of poor human nature?

More miſeries than bleſſings have hitherto reſulted to France, from thoſe republican inſtitutions which were to reſtore the Golden Age. Inſtead of rational freedom, they have only ſerved to produce a deformed ſpectre of deſpotiſm, under which France groans, and at which Europe trembles.

Contraſting her ſituation with that of republican France, Great Britain has certainly every reaſon to be happy under her monarch and her monarchy. The ſovereign of St. James's, is an object of adoration, compared to the five-headed Alligator, in the Directorial palace.

feel a lively intereſt for the happineſs of other nations. He will love juſtice and benevolence even more than his country; and he will never conſent to violate theſe ſacred principles, though by the violation he might increaſe her opulence or her grandeur. To enrich his native country a good Chriſtian will never be an advocate for oppreſſing a weaker neighbour; he will ſcorn to carry fire and ſword, devaſtation and murder into a foreign kingdom, to promote the fancied glory, or ſecurity of his own. A good Chriſtian will conſider war as murder, with an infinite aggravation of its atrocity; and he will refuſe to unſheath the ſword, except in the ſingle caſe of the aggreſſions of tyranny, either from without or from within; and then he will chearfully hazard his fortune, and ſhed his blood in the defence of his country, and for the preſervation of her liberties and her laws.

Such will be a good political Chriſtian; ſuch we may, without any impiety, imagine that Jeſus would have been, were he living on earth, as a man, in the ſociety of men. In his character we meet with ſeveral traits of that national attachment which is the eſſence of patriotiſm. In Luke xix. we read, that Jeſus deſcending from

the mount of Olives, wept when he beheld the city, and the temple, which was the boaſt of every Jew, and the glory of his native land; but which he knew, would, in a few years, preſent only a melancholy ſcene of ruin and devaſtation. This thought rouſed an exclamation of patriotic ſympathy. "Would thou had known, ſaid he, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!!! But now they are hid from thine eyes!" The ſtorm of divine fury which was gathering againſt his country he ſaw; and he ſtruggled in vain, to avert, by reformation and repentance. His countrymen were blind to their danger, and inſenſible to his exhortations. But Jeſus, unable to bring the Jews to a ſerious ſenſe of the calamities which were impending over them, and to open their eyes to the light of the goſpel of immortality, inſtead of execrating with bitterneſs, lamented with tenderneſs their blindneſs and depravity. "O Jeruſalem, ſaid he, O Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!!!" Matt. xxiii. 37. With artleſs, but im-

paſſioned eloquence, he mourned over the wilful obſtinacy of his beloved city. He diſcovers the fervency of a patriot, whoſe affections centre in the welfare of his country, and whoſe ſoul breaths the warmeſt wiſhes for its proſperity.

A good Chriſtian will be the ſtrenuous defender of public virtue and public piety. He will regard the decay of morality and of religion as the greateſt calamity that can befal his country, and as the ſure indication of a declining empire. He, who in a public ſtation, can countenance the leaſt relaxation of public integrity, or abet the abaſement of the national character, by any acts of injuſtice or of inhumanity, by the violation of any one ſocial or ſacred tie, is no Chriſtian, but an enemy to Chriſtianity. A good Chriſtian will glow with an honeſt zeal to preſerve the religion which he venerates from any contaminating mixture, either from hypocriſy or from bigotry; from that foppery of worſhip which mocks the ſupreme intelligence; and from that extravagance and enthuſiaſm which conceals the light of heaven under clouds and darkneſs.

Chriſtianity has been frequently, though I truſt undeſignedly, injured by thoſe who are ſometimes falſely ſtiled evangelical preachers;

who, loſing ſight of the rational practice of the goſpel, talk of nothing but what they call its doctrines; but of which, it is plain, that as they know nothing themſelves, they cannot make them clear to others. By pretending to explain thoſe things of which they have no diſtinct and definite ideas, they are betrayed into the groſſeſt inconſiſtencies, and often the moſt ludicrous abſurdities. The ſublime morality which Jeſus inculcated, and which impreſſes the ſpirit of charity by the moſt awful ſanctions, they paſs over in contemptuous ſilence; while they vainly labour to unfold the dark covering of the ark of the chriſtian myſteries. As the evangelical preachers affect to preach nothing but Jeſus, it is ſtrange that they ſhould ſo rarely recommend to the imitation and the practice of their followers, the ſtriking lineaments of his character, and the moſt prominent features of his doctrine! In a cant, unmeaning jargon, they talk much of vital faith, but they ſay little of vital benevolence, without which faith can be but a ſound. How different their diſcourſes from the diſcourſes of Jeſus!

The inſtructions of Jeſus combine the pureſt morals, with calm and ſober, but ſolemn devo-

tion. They teach love as the eſſential principle of piety. They do not found ſalvation on the ſhadowy baſe of faith in doctrines, which are inſcrutable to the wit of man, and equally obſcure to the ignorant and the wiſe.

The divine author of Chriſtianity, inſtead of wrapping holineſs in myſtery, and evaporating practical goodneſs in the flames of enthuſiaſm, turned the attention of his followers to active beneficence; and inculcated that vital morality, which ſeeks the favour of heaven by increaſing the happineſs of man.*

* Read, Matt. xxv. from v. 32, to the end, where Jeſus makes charity the principal ground of acceptance, at the day of judgment.

There has been much diſpute among Chriſtians, about the nature of our redemption by Jeſus. Some have entertained ſuch high notions of its efficacy, as to ſuppoſe that no works which we can do, can at all conduce to our ſalvation. This doctrine is pregnant with infinite miſchief; and were it univerſally received, would be fatal to the intereſts of juſtice and benevolence. But it is abhorrent both to ſcripture and to reaſon. There is another opinion, that we are to be made immortal and happy, by works only; and without any reference to the conciliatory influence of divine love, manifeſted in the perſon, and energetically operating in the atonement, of Jeſus. The truth in this caſe, as in many others, ſeems to be placed between the extremes of the oppoſite opinions. It appears to me, that of the eternal life, which the ſcriptures promiſe to mankind, the mediatorial ſacrifice of Chriſt is the eſſential cauſe, and benevolence the qualifying habit.

Immortal happineſs is the free gift of God; it is not a debt paid to juſtice, or a tribute to merit. Nor is it a forced gift. We may either accept it or refuſe it. If we accept it, we muſt prove our acceptance an

That this is a faithful delineation of the ſpirit of the religion of Jeſus, we may eaſily learn from

act of rational choice, and, at the ſame time, of grateful remembrance, by conforming to the conditions to which it is appended.

Eternal happineſs is a covenanted mercy. If we will enter into life, we muſt keep the commandments; we muſt live in obedience to the precepts of the goſpel; but ſtill this obedience does not, in the leaſt degree, merit immortality. It is no equivalent, no ſatisfaction paid to the Almighty, for ſo high a privilege. This ſtill remains the free-will offering of divine mercy, influenced by divine love.

The neceſſity of obedience, does not at all invalidate the excellence of the free gift, it rather increaſes it, by fitting our natures for its enjoyment. The parent who leaves his child an inheritance, ſubject to conditions, of which the performance only tends to increaſe the enjoyment, is not ſurely leſs, but more bountiful on that account. The very reſtrictions he impoſes are acts of kindneſs and proofs of love. The conditions of the Goſpel ought to be conſidered in this light. Theſe conditions may be ſummed up in one word, but of very comprehenſive ſignification, in charity. Charity does not merely imply benevolent acts, but benevolent thoughts and affections; in one word, Chriſtian Charity, denotes a heart filled with that ſacred ſtream of divine love, which overflows in love to mankind. This is that qualifying habit which I mentioned above, and which divine mercy made a condition of future happineſs, becauſe it tends to approximate us to the image of God, and becauſe we could not be happy, even in heaven, without it. It does not take from the honours of the atonement of Jeſus, it only fits individuals, and perhaps all the orders of intelligent nature diſperſed through infinite worlds, to taſte its bleſſed influence.

Jeſus makes a happy immortality, as far as it is an act of man's own choice, to conſiſt in benevolence; though he refers the gift itſelf, not to our merits, but to the mere mercy of God, through the mediatorial ſacrifice of the ſon, whoſe "birth was of the womb of the morning"—"whoſe goings forth were from of old, from everlaſting."

If the unbeliever aſk me, how and in what preciſe manner the ſacrifice of Jeſus could annul the mortality of the human ſpecies, and procure for

an attentive perusal of his various discourses; and particularly his inimitable sermon on the mount, which is a summary of the whole Christian doctrine; and which exhibits a picture of

for mankind, an admission into mansions of eternal blessedness, I must fairly confess, that I cannot explain it. It is enough for us to know, that we cannot be fitted for those mansions, without becoming like unto Jesus, in our benevolent affections. It is enough for us, if we have adequate conceptions and a serious conviction of this truth, without perplexing the mind to unravel mysteries which can never be comprehended, and which heaven never designed that man should comprehend. In a future life, more pages of the book of revealed as well as natural knowledge will probably be unfolded to us: at present, there are many inexplicable points in both; on which, while our faculties are thus dim, it behoves us to be silent.

If, knowing our duty here, we perform it to the best of our power, we shall certainly be accepted of God. Whether we square our faith by the precepts of Athanasius, or Arius, or Socinus, we shall enter into life, if we keep the commandments and follow, as nearly as possible, the steps of Jesus, which point the way to immortality. Vainly to attempt to pierce the clouds and darkness that surround the Christian sanctuary, may waste our time, but cannot improve our piety. To meditate on things that are above the sphere of our comprehension, and on which, if we lived for a thousand years, we could never form any distinct ideas, only serves to bewilder the understanding, without mending the heart. The religion of Jesus consists more in beneficent actions than contemplative raptures. I would recommend these few thoughts to the consideration of Mr. Wilberforce, whose book I am willing to impute to the most pious motives, though its general tendency appears to me very different from the general tendency of the discourses and conduct of Jesus: and surely in all cases of this kind, which admit of the least dispute, we ought not to regulate our decisions so much by particular and insulated texts, which we are liable to misconstrue, as by the general

mild unoſtentatious piety, ſoftening the affections, purifying the thoughts, and infuſing into the ſoul the ſacred fire of pure, undefiled devotion; and and of love, human and divine.

I cannot, in this place, refrain from remarking the ſupreme wiſdom which Jeſus diſcovered in making the government of the thoughts a point of religious duty. On this occaſion it was well ſaid by Boerhave, as the judicious Paley has before remarked, "that our Saviour knew mankind better than Socrates." Impure ideas adminiſter poiſon to virtue, and food to depravity. They taint the modeſty of youth, and they heat the ſenſuality of age. They injure thoſe decencies which are eſſential to purity of manners; and that delicacy which is the charm of mixed ſociety. Licentious ideas and licentious diſcourſe, habitually indulged, diſſever thoſe combinations of chaſte and ſerious thought which are the defence of virtue; and inevitably lead to a total and incurable corruption. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of thy mouth," was the injunction of divine wiſdom; and the integrity

ſenſe of the whole ſcripture doctrine, conſidered together; and more eſpecially as it appears in large and very legible characters, in the conduct and inſtructions of our Saviour, which we cannot miſtake, unleſs we wiſh to be miſtaken.

of the moral principle depends greatly on its obſervance.*

But let it not be ſuppoſed that Chriſtianity is an enemy to the pleaſures of innocence, to cheerfulneſs of converſe, or to the ſparkling gaieties of fancy. The religion of Jeſus does not, as Mr. Wilberforce appears in a great meaſure to imagine, direct us to be conſtantly depreſſed with deſpondency; meditating on eternity, or muſing over the grave. Are all the exertions of man, who is ſaid to have been created in the image of God, to be damped by inceſſant reflection on his latter end? Are languor of ſoul and uneaſineſs

* Count Rumford, vol. i. 35, ſays, "So great is the effect of cleanlineſs upon man, that it extends even to his moral habits. Virtue never dwelt long with filth and naſtineſs; nor do I believe there ever was a perſon, ſcrupulouſly attentive to cleanlineſs, who was a conſummate villain."

If outward filth and naſtineſs of body have ſuch an influence on the moral principle, ſurely a ſtronger influence muſt be exerted by filth and naſtineſs of thought and ſpeech. There is a conſtant action and reaction between words and ideas. Thus corruption operates with a double force. It is revolting to obſerve, in the converſation of the diſſolute, the number of harmleſs and often ſacred expreſſions, which they aſſociate with indecency, and which are no ſooner uttered than they kindle the ſenſual fire. If the young wiſh to guard againſt depravity, or the old to ſtop its progreſs, they cannot too ſcrupulouſly ſhun impurity of thought and impurity of ſpeech. It may be laid down as a maxim, juſtified by general experience—that there is no perſon, habitually foul-mouthed, whoſe eſteem is worth ſeeking or whoſe honeſty can be relied on.

of conſcience, dejection of ſpirit and gloomineſs of ideas, the eſſential characteriſtics of Chriſtian piety? Can we not be ſaved, unleſs we are continually darkening the imagination with the ſufferings of the croſs? Did Jeſus direct that piety which borders on miſanthropy; which, in the deluſive dreams of enthuſiaſm, beſtows the tribute of ſalvation rather on the fervour of the lips, than of the heart, on the length of the devotions more than on the benevolence of the conduct? Did not Jeſus himſelf ſanction, both by precept and example, that piety which mingles with the world, without mingling in its corruptions, or partaking of its crimes; which neglects not the various duties of public and domeſtic life; and which is the kind and diligent promoter of ſocial happineſs in all its varieties? Did Jeſus reprobate thoſe inoffenſive gaieties of heart which form a part, and no inconſiderable part, of the captivations of life? Did he repreſent the Chriſtian temper of a gloomy aſpect, covering the face of its votaries with tears and mourning? Is he not himſelf conſtantly deſcribed in ſcripture by the image of a lamb? an image of cheerfulneſs, which we ought not to diſſociate from our ideas of his religion. Is not the

kind notice which he took of little children, of whom the characteriſtic feature is gay and harmleſs mirth; and his declaration that of ſuch is the kingdom of God, a ſufficient teſtimony, that he wiſhed rather to increaſe than to diminiſh the pleaſurable ſenſations of life; and that the diſpoſition and the manners of a Chriſtian ſhould not be ſhaded with the forbidding gloom, the ſullen ſpirit, and the weeping countenance of an enthuſiaſt or a ſectary? Is not the firſt miracle that he wrought, at a marriage in Cana of Galilee, a declaration that he did not come to baniſh cheerfulneſs from the earth; and that the profeſſion of his religion was by no means incompatible with ſocial enjoyment? Thoſe who ſketch the figure of Chriſtianity with a deſponding look and a dejected poſture, muſt be ſtrangers to its genuine ſpirit, ſhedding joy upon the heart, and baniſhing ſadneſs and aſperity from the brow.

Mr. Wilberforce makes religion to conſiſt in the exerciſe of the affections; or in what, according to his deſcription of the matter, and notwithſtanding all his palliations, muſt be underſtood to mean—an inflamed ſtate of the devotional feelings. Thus he indirectly encourages enthuſiaſm and hypocriſy; for, by artificial con-

trivances, the affections may be raiſed to almoſt any pitch; and the greateſt ſinners have ſometimes been abſorbed in what might thus be called, pious ecſtacies. The effervеſcence of devotional feelings has, indeed, often been the characteriſtic of the moſt worthleſs of mankind.

Mr. Wilberforce would have acted more wiſely, if he had made religion to conſiſt, as Jeſus Chriſt evidently did, in thoſe benevolent ſympathies which invariably lead to benevolent actions. Here there is no room for hypocriſy or deluſion. Religion is appreciated by a rule, of which we cannot miſtake the application.

When Jeſus was aſked which was the great commandment in the law, he anſwered, thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind. This is the firſt and great commandment. And the ſecond is like unto it. Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf. On theſe two commandments, ſaid he, hang all the law and the prophets, Matt. xxii. In Mark xii. he declared, thore is none other commandments greater than theſe.

Hence we learn, that the love of God to be pure and holy, muſt be identified with the love

of mankind. In other words, divine love is ſocial love impelling to pure beneficence. His boſom, therefore, poſſeſſes the genuine principle of divine love; the elementary flame of immortal happineſs, whoſe actions and affections are conſonant to this grand and fundamental law of all religion and all morality; "Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thyſelf;" or, as the ſame precept has been expreſſed by Jeſus in other words, "Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye alſo unto them," Matt. vii. 12.

Thus we ſee, that the whole ſum and ſubſtance of religion conſiſts not in the effervеſcing ſenſations of devotional zeal, but in the exerciſe of thoſe benevolent ſympathies which endear men to God, while they endear them to each other. Let us conſtantly try the chriſtianity of Chriſtians by this teſt, and we ſhall never be deceived. But, if we make religion to conſiſt in thoſe tumultuous emotions of the ſoul which have no relation to beneficence, or in a bare aſſent to thoſe doctrines which have no influence on human conduct, we are only opening a door by which enthuſiaſm and impoſture may enter into the ſanctuary of the righteous, and uſurp the honours which belong to ſincere and unaffected piety.

In this part of my work, I had intended to have noticed, at ſome length, Mr. Wilberforce's remarks upon the theatres; but as he does not ſeem to reprobrate dramatic repreſentations as eſſentially evil, but only as accidentally aſſociated with evil; and as the evil of which he complains would exiſt, and probably with more criminal aggravations, if there were not a theatre in London, I ſhall ſay but little on the ſubject.

If Mr. Wilberforce do not chooſe to be preſent at a play, becauſe the playhouſes are frequented by debauchees, he might, on the ſame ground of argument, abſtain from the ſenate or the ſanctuary. Corruption and depravity are to be met with in every walk of life, and under almoſt every modification of ſocial intercourſe; and if we will go where they are not, we muſt go out of the world at once. I know no other alternative. But does not Mr. Wilberforce recollect, that the divine author of chriſtianity eat, without ſcruple, at the ſame table with publicans and ſinners? Does he not know that virtue is proved by reſiſting temptation; and that he diſplays the brighteſt integrity, who is chaſte amid ſeduction, and incorrupt amid corruption?

Mr. Wilberforce appears to have imbibed more of the ſpirit of Calvin, dark, moroſe, and ſullen, for ever lowering over the infernal abyſs, than of the ſpirit of Jeſus, bright, ſerene, unclouded, benign, and cheerful; indulgent to human frailty; comforting the weary and the heavy-laden; alluring the ſinner from the error of his ways, by the proſpect of pardon and of peace; not driving him to deſpair and wretchedneſs by unforgiving ſternneſs.

Such was Jeſus! ſuch he ſtill is! an object of univerſal love!

I ſhall conclude with remarking, that every Chriſtian, as far as human frailty will permit, ought to make the character of Jeſus the pattern for his affections and his conduct. Thoſe who, favoured by that portion of the divine aſſiſtance which is never wanting to the pious endeavours of humanity, ſhall aſpire to imitate the founder of their faith, in his mild and benevolent temper, in his gentle manners, in his fervent, rational, and unoſtentatious piety, in his obedience to God, and in his tenderneſs to man, will become the zealous obſervers of every ſacred and ſocial tie; zealous for the happineſs of their kindred, their friends, their country, and the world.

## *A few thoughts on the free diſcuſſion of the truths of revelation.*

NO man's conviction, as far as it is rational, can be greater than the degree of his knowledge. Thoſe who think otherwiſe, are only blind to their ignorance; and their preſumption is folly. They are apt to be hardened in error, and to oppoſe a mere *ipſe dixit* to the plaineſt arguments.

A man's faith in revelation, and of courſe his obedience to its precepts, is uſually according to his conviction of its truth. But the truth of revelation, not being perceptible to the organs of ſenſe, or capable of a palpable demonſtration, can only be aſcertained by diligent inveſtigation. Such inveſtigation of revealed religion was certainly intended by its all-wiſe author; becauſe its evidences are ſo arranged and modified, that there can be no conviction of its truth without ſerious enquiry.

Had the Almighty intended to have precluded all diſcuſſion of the truths of revelation, he would have rendered its evidence ſo clear, ſimple, and indiſputable, that no two people could have differed on the ſubject. At preſent there are no two people who think preciſely alike on all the points of Chriſtianity.

Why has the divine author of revealed religion permitted ſo vaſt a multiplicity of opinions on its truth and its doctrines? Certainly for the ſake of exciting enquiry, and of promoting diſcuſſion; for which there would have been neither neceſſity nor motive, if all men had thought alike on the ſubject. A complete uniformity of opinions might likewiſe, by promoting religious indifference, have been injurious to practical piety. The various ſhades of faith and degrees of conviction which prevail in the world, were likewiſe probably intended to teach us charity in our opinions, and humility in our judgments. Contented with our own conviction, we are not to imprecate anathemas on thoſe who are not convinced in the ſame way.

If there be any to whom the evidences of Chriſtianity may ſeem inſufficient or inconcluſive, from their wanting either the inclination or the candour to give them a due and ſober conſideration; are we juſtified in perſecuting them, either for their ignorance, or their illiberality? Certainly not. The genuine meekneſs of Chriſtianity ought rather to incline us to behold their blindneſs with compaſſion, and their errors with forbearance: and to pray that God may open

their eyes to ſee the truth; or may touch their hearts with that conviction of its importance, as may make them examine its evidences with ſeriouſneſs and candour; and which cannot fail, in the end, of impreſſing their minds with faith in Chriſt Jeſus.

Chriſtians too ſeldom pray, with that fervor and ſincerity which they ought, for the converſion of unbelievers. They too often condemn them moſt uncharitably to damnation, without ever breathing a wiſh to heaven for their converſion to the light of immortality. The bleſſed Jeſus evidently intended, that the converſion of unbelievers ſhould make one of the daily petitions of believing Chriſtians. "Thy kingdom come," is a ſupplication that Infidelity may vaniſh, and that the belief and the practical influence of Chriſtianity may prevail in all the world. But with what ſincerity can we utter this petition, while a bitter jealouſy is rankling in our hearts; while we ourſelves diſcover none of that mild ſpirit that was in Jeſus, and rather ſtrive to exaſperate than to convince the gainſayer?

If Infidelity have any arguments to produce againſt the truth of revelation, let them be calmly and rationally refuted: but if it can produce nothing but frothy abuſe and virulent miſrepre-

ſentation, the beſt reply is—that dignified ſilence and compaſſion which Jeſus himſelf diſplayed, when he was rebuked and reviled. Can we follow a better example than that of Jeſus?

Falſhood and rancour always counteract themſelves. We are all convinced, that neither the ſallies of wit, nor the perverſeneſs of malice, can ſhake the philoſophy of Newton. Should we puniſh the jack-daw for mocking the eagle?

Have we any reaſon to dread, leſt the blaſphemies of an individual ſhould overturn the religion of the God of nature? The mere ſuppoſition is a diſgrace to our belief. The ſcoffs of impiety cannot ſhake the fabric of heaven.

The Almighty, who diſpenſed his religion to mankind, has no doubt provided, in the common order of things, for its preſervation; and it is full as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that the Infidel can arreſt the progreſs of revealed truth, as that he can ſtop the flowing of the ocean. The moral world, as well as the natural, has its peculiar laws; though thoſe of the latter are more open to our obſervation, becauſe more familiar to our ſenſes.

Man being conſtituted a free and rational being, the evidence of revelation was ſo diſpoſed, as that it might controul his conduct through the medium of his judgment. It was to rule him, not by con-

ſtraint, but by choice. Hence its truth was propoſed as an object of rational enquiry, and to this enquiry we are prompted by its connection, not with a periſhable but an eternal intereſt; and which conſequently renders it an object of ſuperior importance to every human conſideration.

Thoſe who think that the truth of revelation ought not to be diſcuſſed, are by no means its beſt friends. Its diſcuſſion ſeems to be an injunction of the almighty, and deſignedly rendered neceſſary, by the very nature of its proofs; and of this I am firmly convinced, that the more it is diſcuſſed, the more will its beauty be unfolded and its truth be diſplayed—the more will the love of its laws and the conviction of its importance approach to univerſality. Men ought not to be Chriſtians merely from hearſay or from faſhion, but from conviction. Every chriſtian ſhould be able to give a reaſon of "the hope that is in him;" and thoſe who cannot do this, though they may not be infidels, hardly deſerve the appellation of believers.*

* The writings of the infidel will not unfrequently be found to do more ſervice than injury to the Chriſtian cauſe. The frequent aſſault of the citadel, keeps the garriſon awake. The attacks of the infidel, call forth the energies of the faithful, they excite arguments to ſtrengthen the weak or to confirm the wavering, which might otherwiſe never have appeared.

## (Note continued.)

It is a very common, but a very miſtaken ſuppoſition, that the writings of the French Deiſts produced that aſtoniſhing degree of infidelity that prevailed in France. Thoſe writings were only a ſubordinate and ſecondary cauſe. The primary and eſſential cauſe, was the groſs and palpable corruptions of the Romiſh Church. Thoſe corruptions, accumulating for centuries, at laſt produced a monſter that devoured its mother. The Deiſtical philoſophers might have haſtened his birth, but they had no ſhare in his formation. If the Deiſtical writers had been the eſſential cauſe of the declenſion of Chriſtianity in France, the ſame cauſe, ſtill operating, would have prevented its revival. Chriſtianity would have ſunk, to riſe no more! But there is the ſtrongeſt proof that the corruptions of the church and the clergy, rather than the ſcoffs of the philoſophers, were the cauſe of the prevailing infidelity in France; for the beſt informed travellers into that country aſſure us, that the infidelity itſelf is declining, now the cauſe that produced is no more! The loathſome ſenſuality, the proſtitute venality, and the ſplendid hypocriſy of the French church and the French clergy have vaniſhed, and the religion of Jeſus is beginning to appear with more of its primitive ſimplicity. It is now probable that Chriſtianity will, in the courſe of a few years, when the preſent atrocious tyranny of the directorial ruffians ſhall have paſſed away, ſtrike a much deeper root than before into the minds and the affections of the French; that the faith of the people, no longer cheated by the mummery of Popery, but founded on knowledge, will be immoveable; and that all the combined powers of Deiſm will be too feeble to do it any further injury. In this perſuaſion, as a Chriſtian and a miniſter of Jeſus, I feel a happineſs that I cannot expreſs, and I humbly implore the Supreme Diſpoſer that it may not be illuſory.

# POSTSCRIPT.

TO thoſe candid and erudite critics and reviewers, who will point out any errors, into which I may involuntarily have been betrayed in the foregoing pages, I ſhall liſten with deference and with gratitude. If I have erred, I will boldly affirm that it is not becauſe I am attached to error.

From the furious zealots of party, I neither expect, nor ſolicit any quarter; for party-zeal is always indiſcriminate in its cenſure and its praiſe; and both are equally contemptible. Inſtead of adminiſtering freſh fuel to that factious rage, and that ſpirit of bigotry, which is unhappily ſpreading through theſe once-happy kingdoms, I have endeavoured to ſoften the animoſities of faction by the precepts of benevolence, and to inſpire even the breaſts of bigots with Chriſtian moderation. If I have contributed only a mite to this great end, which is ſo devoutly to be wiſhed for, I ſhall conſole myſelf in every fortune, with this idea, that my exertions have not been in vain.

FINIS.